

**Michigan Freedom Trail Commission Meeting Minutes**  
Conference Call – Bigelow Room, Michigan History Center  
December 16, 2016

**Commissioners present for Conference Call:** Ron Brown, Rochelle Danquah, Roy Finkenbine, Juanita Moore, Edwina Murphy (in person), Michael Nassaney, Robin Peebles, David Teeter, James Turner

**Excused:** Tamara Barnes

**Absent:** Earlie Eason

**Staff present:** Mark Harvey (for Sandra Clark), Mary Patrick

1. **Call to Order:** Vice-chair Finkenbine called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM.
2. **Agenda:** Teeter moved to approve the agenda; Brown seconded the motion, and the agenda was approved unanimously.
3. **Public Comments:** None.
4. **Approval of Minutes:** Teeter moved to approve the August 26, 2016, meeting minutes with a correction on page 3 as noted by Finkenbine; Moore seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved with the noted corrections.
5. **Action Items:**
  - a. **Network to Freedom (NTF) Nominations**

Nassaney reported that two of his Western Michigan University (WMU) students partnered with the Cass County Historical Society to research the 19 sites that are on Cass County's Underground Railroad self-driving tour. The students drafted a tour nomination that included ten of the 19 sites. The Historical Society, however, plans to submit its own nominations separately. Nassaney will circulate the nominations prepared by the students to the Sites Committee, and request their feedback.

Finkenbine said that an event will be held at the Skillman Branch of the Detroit Public Library in recognition of the site being approved by the NPS. The site is connected to the Blackburn case and riot that occurred there. Finkenbine will try to obtain a copy to send to Patrick for the files. Harvey added that all the original documents connected with the case are in the Archives of Michigan and invited the FTC to see them in conjunction with a future meeting. He added that the materials are also suitable for an exhibit.

Danquah joined the meeting at 9:18 AM.

A brief discussion was held about the nomination of the Wright Museum, and if NPS would allow it to be nominated in separate categories for both their programs and as an institution. Finkenbine offered to take the lead on the nomination for the Detroit Historical Museum's exhibit. Patrick will ask Sandra Clark to report on the status of the Watkins Farm site at the next meeting.

Danquah mentioned that she received some information about the Cass County tour that might be of interest. She agreed to discuss the information with Finkenbine and Nassaney after the meeting.

**b. Update on NPS List Verifications**

At the June 3, 2016, meeting, commissioners agreed to verify the accuracy of listings currently appearing on the NTF website.

Nassaney said he has been unable to reach the contact person to confirm the existence of the 7-day Freesoil tour. Murphy will share contact information with Nassaney. Another 1-day tour that Michelle Johnson leads runs periodically, but it is not listed on the NPS site. He expects that the self-driving tour in Cass County will eventually be added.

**c. 2017 Meeting Schedule & Locations**

Meetings in 2017 will continue to be held quarterly on Fridays at 11:00 AM, with the first meeting scheduled for 11:00 AM on Friday, February 17, at the Michigan History Center. Finkenbine suggested that a visit to the Archives be included in this meeting, and Harvey agreed to make the arrangements with Patrick. Tentative dates set for 2017: May 5; September 15; December 1. Patrick will confirm that Sandra Clark is available on those dates, and send the final schedule to members.

**6. Reports**

a. **Staff:** None

b. **Chairperson:** None

c. **Vice Chair:** None

d. **Commissioner Reports:** None

e. **Standing Committee Updates:**

- **Site Identification, Facilities and Programs (Danquah, Nassaney):** Danquah confirmed that she will make a written formal request to former FTC member Carol Mull to join this committee in the next few weeks.
- **Cultural and Heritage Tourism (Peebles, Teeter):** Peebles thanked FTC members for the items that were sent to her for publication. She noted that the Pure Michigan document distributed needs the website added, and said she would send that information to Patrick to add. Peebles and Teeter will work on ideas for 2017 since work will begin during mid-January. Items should be submitted to Peebles and Teeter, and should include a paragraph with dates and contact information. Travel Michigan will do further research, and Peebles and Teeter will determine when and how things will be made available to the public, possibly opting to hold an item for a particular season.
- **Preservation and Support (Barnes, Turner):** Turner noted that as part of their education component, the Michigan Historic Preservation Network and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are using hands-on skilled trades classes at historic properties to teach people how to properly enhance, restore, maintain, and make sustainable historic sites and parks. He suggested that these things also be included in all FTC educational materials. Finkenbine agreed and suggested that FTC members determine how those things can be included in

each of the various committees. He will also connect with Jim Turner to get clarification on what the education committee could and should do.

- **Education Committee (Barnes, Brown, Finkenbine):** Danquah will get contact information from Tammy Barnes to invite Ruth Andrews to join this committee. Finkenbine reported that he and Ron Brown expect to have their documents finalized and ready to share at the February meeting.

Danquah reminded commissioners about the need to reach out to people for the committees.

**f. Nominating Committee Report**

Nassaney reported that the Nominating Committee (Nassaney, Peebles, Teeter) put forth the names of Roy Finkenbine to serve as Chair and Rochelle Danquah as Vice-chair. Teeter moved to close the nominations, and Moore seconded. Turner moved to accept the nominations as presented, Moore seconded. With unanimous support, the motion carried for Finkenbine to serve as Chair and Danquah as Vice-chair.

**7. New Business: None**

**8. News and Announcements:**

Teeter reported that the Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Commission will set up a meeting with interested parties to take a more coordinated approach to its work. FTC members are invited to attend because of their knowledge of local black historic sites. Danquah and Moore expressed interest, and Teeter asked that anyone else contact him directly if they can attend.

Turner said that Preservation Detroit (formerly Preservation Wayne) has a broad history tour of 1905-1935 African-American history that runs along Ferry Street and north to the Lewis College of Business area.

Finkenbine said the 2017 National Network to Freedom Conference is tentatively set for May 18-21 in Maryland. He will share the information as it becomes available.

**9. Adjourn meeting:**

With business completed, the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 AM without objection.

The next meeting will be held at 11:00 AM on Friday, February 17, 2017, at the Michigan History Center.

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Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary